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Newsroom: Judge Clifton on Fairness, Equality, RWU Law

Roger Williams University School of Law

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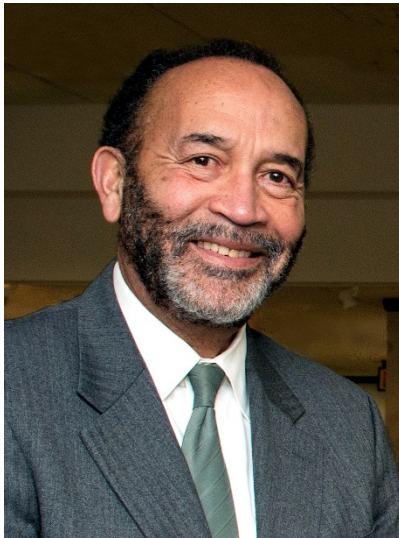
Newsroom

Judge Clifton on Fairness, Equality, RWU Law

At RWU Law, Judge Edward C. Clifton remains focused on promoting fair treatment of minorities in the courts and problems of inequality in the legal profession.

From Rhode Island Lawyers Weekly: "[Judge keeps focus on equality, fairness in move to RWU Law](#)" by

Patrick Murphy



Bristol, Oct. 1, 2015: Judge Edward C. Clifton has spent his entire professional life promoting the fair treatment of minorities in the courts and addressing problems of inequality in the legal profession.

So it should come as no surprise that his focus didn't change when he stepped down from the bench to join the faculty of **Roger Williams University School of Law**. [...]

Clifton spoke recently with Lawyers Weekly's Pat Murphy. [...]

Q. *What excites you about your new work at Roger Williams University School of Law?*

A. I still have a drive to stay involved with the law, generally speaking, and more specifically with some of the things that interest me. It's stimulating just being in this environment. It's similar to the kinds of things I was doing while I was on the bench, being able to share information with colleagues and learn from them,

either things that I had never thought about or just getting a different take on things. Being around other faculty and students, entertaining their questions and interacting with them, it just keeps me on my game, so to speak.

***Q.** What are some of the subjects that you hope to explore as you and your students research issues relating to racial and ethnic fairness in the courts?*

A. Recently I was appointed by the Conference of Chief Justices, as well as the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts, to serve as a member of a national advisory board on community engagement with the state courts. The idea behind it is that there's a sense [that] minority communities, communities of color, have a lack of trust and confidence in the courts being able to resolve the disputes that they have. So the Conference of Chief Justices along with the National Consortium applied for a grant through the State Justice Institute to go out and learn from these communities exactly what the problems are.

***Q.** In your view, what are the underlying problems facing minority communities in dealing with the justice system?*

A. There are so many different factors, and in different communities there are different factors. Certainly within the criminal justice "silo" there are obviously concerns about the fact that sentencing has been disproportionate. Most of us recognize the disparities in sentencing with respect to cocaine as a result of the so-called war on drugs. Those things have been long been felt by communities of color. But it's only recently that other communities have come to accept what people of color have been saying for the longest time — that this doesn't make sense. [...]